

February 26, 2024

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Nicholas Fisichelli, Ph.D., President & CEO, Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park,  
P.O. Box 277, Winter Harbor, Maine 04693

Re: Support for LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this legislation. Schoodic Institute is a nonprofit partner of the National Park Service and a center for inspiring science, learning, and community for a changing world. We are located within ancestral territory of the Wabanaki people, in Acadia National Park on the site of a former U.S. Navy Base at Schoodic Point.

We support the proposed changes to the outdated 1980 Settlement Act that would restore recognition of the Tribes' inherent rights and enable the Wabanaki Nations—and all of Maine—to benefit from the same "rights, privileges, powers, duties and immunities" as other federally recognized Indian tribes within the United States.

At a time when climate change and environmental degradation are accelerating, we believe that honoring Wabanaki sovereignty and supporting Tribal stewardship of land and water will benefit all Maine citizens, immediately and in the future. Schoodic Institute is committed to fostering a stronger conservation movement in Maine that reflects and centers Wabanaki history, Indigenous perspectives, and traditional ecological knowledge.

Federal recognition will enable us to expand our current partnerships with the National Park Service and Wabanaki communities to support Indigenous science that informs protection of conserved lands. For thousands of years, the Wabanaki people have cared for this place. We cannot face the next thousand, or even the next ten, without Wabanaki leadership. And to lead, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, and the Mi'kmaq Nation must have the same rights to self-determination as other federally recognized Tribes in the United States.

LD 2007 will strengthen our capacity to respond to the urgent threats posed by a rapidly changing climate, help reconnect all Maine citizens to our shared natural heritage, while beginning the long overdue process of repairing historical decisions that have harmed all of us who live in Wabanaki homeland.

Thank you for your consideration